



PATRICK TESTIN
STATE SENATOR

Op-Ed: Doctors and Patients, Not Government, Should Decide if Cannabis is the Right Treatment

One of my early role models was my grandfather, Blair Testin. He was a robust man who was filled with energy and a heart and mind for service. He worked for the State of Wisconsin as an expert on the state's retirement system, and he passed his interest in government on to me. I loved him very much, and it affected me a great deal when he was diagnosed with lung and bone cancer.

I watched as the cancer and the chemotherapy treatments caused him to lose his appetite, weight, and much of his strength. It was hard to see this strong and vibrant man grow weaker. I saw him make the decision to go outside the law to seek treatment with medical marijuana. It restored his appetite, and I believe it added months to his life. I am grateful for all the time that I had with him.

This is my story – but there are thousands more just like it from all across Wisconsin. I've spoken to people with similar accounts from each of the six counties I represent. It's time for government to stop turning patients into criminals. The decision to treat a medical condition with cannabis should be between the patient and the doctor – that's why I've co-authored a proposal to legalize medical cannabis with my colleagues Representative Chris Taylor (D-Madison) and Senator Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton), both of whom have been leaders on this issue in previous sessions. I believe both parties in the legislature can come together on this issue and get results for patients in Wisconsin.

Already, doctors are allowed to prescribe medicine derived from far more dangerous substances. Opiate abuse is a serious problem both in our state and across the nation. As we make it more difficult for those who would abuse these drugs to access them, we also make it more difficult for those in need of legitimate treatment to get the care they deserve. Medicinal marijuana can help fill that gap with fewer side effects and less long term risk.

I know this idea isn't without controversy. The stigma attached to marijuana is decades old, but the real world experiences of patients – friends, neighbors, or relatives – have been helping to diffuse that. With this bill, we are hoping to provide doctors and patients with an option.